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TWO VIEWPOINTS:

growth and its consequences

MARCH 1972

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STOPPING GROWTH IS SUICIDE

By Henry C. Wallich

Anthony Lewis, in two recent issues of the New York Times, warns us of the deadly consequences of growth.

Running out of resources, running into total pollution, running to the point of total exhaustion and collapse - those are the ultimate rewards of growth. We must stop growth, not just of population, but of production and income.

The group of ecologists who generated this well-meaning scare are members of an old club. Its founder, Rev. Thomas Malthus, issued dire warnings of inevitable starvation in 1798. This having proved a poor bet, the emphasis today shifts to a dearth of all natural resources and mounting pollution.

ENVIRONMENT NEWS is published monthly by the Alberta Department of the Environment, and is distributed free of charge. Address all correspondence to: Environment News, 7th Floor Milner Building, 10040 - 104th Street, EDMONTON 14, Alberta.

March 1972

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 11

Honourable W.J. Yurko
Minister

Dr. E.E. Ballantyne
Deputy Minister

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It does not take an ecologist to explain that if the world's population doubles every so many years, after a while there will be Standing Room Only, at least on the surface of this planet. Likewise, it is fairly obvious that if we deplete existing resources without discovering new sources, developing methods of recycling, and inventing substitutes, we shall some day run out. But perhaps an economist can be helpful in clarifying why these problems are not top priority today.

In the first place the economy will simply substitute things that are plentiful for things that become scarce. If we run out of aluminum, that will encourage manufacturers to use something else, stimulate research and development to produce substitutes.

Some scientists believe that matter and energy are fundamentally inter-changeable in many forms, but as a layman, I would not bet on any near-term miracles. The simple processes of economics will keep us going. If they don't, the ecologists advice to slow down will not be worth much - it would only postpone the day of disaster without avoiding it.

In the course of centuries, more basic adjustments will probably be needed. Population may stop growing, production may stop growing. The chances are that the world will adapt to the changing environment gradually. Lack of space will cause families to shrink, if families then still exist. Great per capita income will reduce interest in producing and consuming more. We do not need to rely on "misery", as Mr. Maithus thought, to bring about the adjustment.

The real question is at what time this transition will have to be faced. New York restaurants carry signs to the effect that occupancy by more than some maximum number is unlawful.

If half a dozen persons were to gather in an otherwise empty restaurant with such a sign and discuss heatedly the urgency of keeping newcomers out, they would be in something like the position of Americans debating the zero-growth notion. To stop growing now, generations before the real problem of growth arise, if ever, would be to commit suicide for fear of remote death.

The ecologists do not seem to be aware of what it would mean to freeze total income anywhere near today's level. Do they mean that the present income distribution is to be preserved, with the poor frozen into their inadequacies? Would that go for the underdeveloped countries too? Or do they have in mind an equalization of incomes?

It will take pretty drastic cuts in upper-income bracket standards to bring them down to the average American family income of about \$10,000, to say nothing of a cut to average world income. We can, and perhaps should, approach this condition over generations. Trying to do it quickly would create completely needless problems.

The ecologists also do not seem to be aware of what their prescriptions, contrary to their wishes, might do to the environment. If growth came to a halt, it is obvious that every last penny of public and private income would be drawn upon to provide minimal consumer satisfactions. There would be very little left for the cleaning-up job that needs to be done. Growth is the main source from which that job must be financed.

I would like to end with a quote from my Newsweek column on which Mr. Lewis commented. "A world without growth, that is, without change, is as hard for us to imagine as a world of everlasting growth and change. Somewhere in the dim future, if humanity does not blow itself up, there may lie a world in which physical change will be minimal ... hopefully a much more humane and less materialistic world. We shall not live to see it."

The writer, a professor in Yale University's economics department, is a Newsweek magazine columnist.

GROWTH IS DISASTER

A new international study warns that the human race faces disaster within the next 100 years unless it collectively brakes current rates of growth.

The study calls for urgent efforts to create a new, lower-keyed "world of non-growth" to insure that "human society can survive indefinitely on earth with an enriching existence for all".

If present growth rates in world population, food production, industrialization, pollution and depletion of resources continue, the study says, the most probable result will be "a sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity".

A group of scientists from six nations used a computer and mathematical models in preparing the study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The conclusions are published in a new book, *The Limits of Growth*.

The scientists say the planet has limits beyond which man and his activities cannot grow and these limits rapidly are being reached.

But, according to the New York Times, there are scientists, particularly economists, who are skeptical of the MIT group. "It's just utter nonsense", remarked one leading economist, who asked that he not be named. He added that he felt there was little evidence that the MIT computer model represented reality or that it was based on testable scientific data.

Another economist, Simon S. Kuznets of Harvard, a Nobel prize-winning authority on the economic growth of nations, said he had not examined the MIT work first-hand, but he expressed doubt about the wisdom of stopping growth. "It's a simplistic kind of conclusion - you have problems and you solve them by stopping all sources of change," he said.

Others, like Henry C. Wallich of Yale, says a no-growth economy is hard to imagine, and that it might serve to lock poor cultures into their poverty. (See previous article).

The MIT researchers also say world policy makers must decide to do something about the problem of growth by 1990, ideally by 1975.

To avert disaster from what the scientists term mankind's inordinate dedication to growth during the past 4,000 years, they call for creation of a "steady state society" in which:

- Family size worldwide would drop to an average of two children so that the rates of birth and death would be equal. The world's population then would be only slightly larger than its present 3.6 billion, instead of doubling every 33 years at its current growth rate.
- Services such as health care, education and cultural activities, would then be valued more highly than material goods.
- Higher priorities would be assigned to equality in production and distribution of food and to enriching and preserving soil.
- The average lifetime of industrial capital would be increased by designing manufactured goods for greater durability and easier repair.
- Consumption of resources would be reduced gradually to one quarter of what it is today.

The scientists say they've concluded under such a system:

- Twice as much food would be available for everyone throughout the world, compared with the present outlook.
- Through putting greater accent on health care, the average lifetime worldwide would be 70 years.
- With the world's wealth more equitably distributed, the world average income per person would be only \$1,800 yearly. But beneficial services would be tripled, and there would be much more leisure time.

The study says that "neither vast new technological breakthroughs nor a simplistic return to primitivism will help man much in finding his way out of the growth trap".

Two testing units will travel around the province beginning about mid-April. All cities and towns with an AMA office will be visited. The units will be set up at shopping centres on week-ends when traffic density is high and will be available at the AMA office the rest of the week.

Cars and drivers will not be identified during the testing by licence number or name.

One of the more interesting findings, said Mr. Carlson, will be the effectiveness of anti-pollution equipment which all newer cars have built into their engines.

"The pollution from a car is directly related to how well in tune a car is. It's entirely possible that a newer car with all kinds of anti-pollution devices will produce more pollution than an older car that's better tuned.

(Reprinted from The Edmonton Journal)

IN BRIEF

Queen's University students have demonstrated that softdrink cans can be used to form house sections that meet building code standards.

Three competing student teams used the uncrushed cans in a project organized in September by Prof. R.L.E. Brown of the mechanical engineering department.

Tom Mulvenna, a second-year mechanical engineering student demonstrated his group's design, which consisted of a single layer of closely packed cans in an upright position. They were used as "filling" for a board sandwich with layers of insulation between the cans as a lightweight- coverboard on outer walls.

The second model, demonstrated by student Ronald Hare, used cans in the horizontal position, again on the sandwich principle, with insulation between metal and board layers.

Student Jack McJannett demonstrated the third model which used three layers of upright cans bound together by cord and solidified glass fibre. It got its rigidity from the glass-fibre bonding compound.

The University of Alberta discharges about 20 gallons of liquid radioactive wastes into the city's sewers each month, a university survey says.

The Campus Waste Disposal Study also estimates that the university pours another 5,000 gallons of non-radioactive chemical wastes down drains each month.

The wastes - produced mainly by scientific faculties and departments - include formaldehyde, solvents, acids, petroleum products, insecticides, soaps and phosphates, detergents and other materials.

The nuclear wastes discharged into sewers by the University of Alberta probably represent no real health hazard, a university official said.

Dr. A.A. Noujaim, chairman of the University's radiation control committee, said undetermined amounts of tritium are being lost into the sewer system but added that the amounts lose their radioactivity fairly quickly, and are diluted by water and sewage treatment processes.

More than four years of trudging to the water tap has not dampened the dedication of the anti-fluoridationists.

Between 60 and 70 people are still going to the non-fluoridated tap at the Rosedale treatment plant in Edmonton to replenish their drinking supplies - about the same number who used the special tap when it was installed in 1967.

Phil Walker, assistant general manager of Edmonton Water and Sanitation, said Monday that about 3,000 gallons are being taken from the tap each month.

Calgary Power plans to step up the weed harvesting program at Lake Wabamun this summer, the company announced.

T.D. Stanley, production manager for Calgary Power, announced the company will acquire almost \$100,000 worth of weed-cutting equipment and will award a contract to being harvesting weeds in the lake late in May.

Last summer the provincial land and forest department operated a weed cutter on the lake and this will be made available to Calgary Power, along with a transporter and an unloading device.

The company will add another weed harvester and three more transporters to a "systematic" operation employing about 100 men.

Residents at the lake have complained that warm water discharged from Calgary Power's two power plants on the lake, 40 miles west of Edmonton has hastened the growth of weeds, harming the area as a recreational site.

The companies that ship crude oil and oil products through Canadian waters recently began paying an extra 15 cents a ton to Ottawa. The money is to go into a "Maritime Pollution Claims Fund", a kind of unsatisfied judgment fund to pay for cleaning up marine oil spills.

The additional levy is not expected to have any effect on fuel prices to the consumer. On a per-gallon basis, it works out to less than one-seventeenth of a cent.

Scientists from around the world will take a global census of environmental problems September 10 to 16 when the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources meets in the Banff Centre.

Membership of the IUCN, which is based in Morges, Switzerland, includes governments and governmental and private organizations from 70 nations.

It has support of three United Nations agencies and maintains close co-operation with the Council of Europe, the Organization of African Unity, Organization of American States and other international bodies.

The IUCN was founded in 1948 and works to encourage conservation of natural resources, especially endangered species of plants and animals through consultation with governmental agencies.

The 13th General Assembly of the IUCN in Banff will provide a forum for discussion of environmental problems raised at a United Nations conference in Stockholm in June.

Topics at the Banff conference will include national and international environmental policies, management of non-agricultural rural lands, the dynamics of vanishing species and their habitats, the conservation of marine habitats and conservation in a world of rising expectations.

Canada-United States plans for a concentrated attack on Great Lakes pollution have suffered a setback with disclosure that the White House has vetoed a \$14-million sewage disposal program proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The report accompanying the request was made public by Representative Abner J. Mikva (Dem.-Ill) who said in a House of Representatives speech Feb. 9 that the U.S. still is spending more time and money polluting the Great Lakes than we are spending to revitalize them.

Control of pollution from storm and sanitary sewers is one of about a dozen major projects being negotiated. The negotiations started as a followup to an International Joint Commission report more than a year ago and was to have been completed by the end of 1971, but still is being negotiated.

Although sewage control was only part of the overall package, sources close to the negotiations suggested the veto implies U.S. negotiators now cannot commit the U.S. as firmly to the proposals as originally hoped.

EPA said it was told the program was vetoed because of the large federal budget deficit.

NEWS from the Alberta Department of the Environment

The Honourable W.J. Yurko, Minister of the Environment, announced that a consortium of firms headed up by Intercontinental Engineering Ltd. has been selected to conduct a study on the Athabasca Tar Sands in north-eastern Alberta.

Other firms involved in the consortium are the Research Council of Alberta, Western Research Development Ltd., Hydrocarb Consultants Ltd., D & S Petroleum Consultants, Geo-Science Research Associates Ltd., and Artic MacKenzie Consultants.

The project director, H.V. Page, is experienced in the management of the existing tar sands operation.

The project team is sponsored by Intercontinental Engineering Limited through its Alberta principal, Angus Butler Engineering Ltd.

The study will identify the various methods that could be used for oil extraction and their comparative merits with respect to minimum adverse effects on the environment.

It will make recommendations with respect to mining, extraction and processing methods and procedures that should be employed to eliminate or minimize adverse effects on the environment, and will recommend constraints to be applied on plant location, plant capacity and number of plants per given area.

It will also determine which effects or problems should be given priority in research efforts, the allocation of resources for abatement, and legislation. Investigations will include recommendations for the establishment of a realistic balance between long and short term effects on the environment. The study should also enable the government to select optimum strategies in the implementation of long term tar sands development policies.

All members of the team are Canadian and the majority are Alberta residents. They will work with the Department of the Environment and other agencies of the provincial government towards realistic guidelines for the orderly development of the Athabasca Tar Sands.

An engineering study of the environmental consequences of thermal power production on Lake Wabamun has been awarded to Reid Crowther & Partners Ltd. Mr. P.D. Lawson, an engineer with the Calgary office of that firm, will act as the Study Director.

The study will evaluate the consequences of present and future power development on the lake. Present waste water treatment facilities will be examined to determine the degree of control, and any adverse effects of the waste water on the lake.

The object of the study is to provide guidelines for the preservation of Lake Wabamun as a major recreation area, and to maintain the water quality and lake environment at a high standard.

Reid Crowther & Partners Ltd. expect the study to be complete within 6 months.

In order to maintain a continuous check on water quality in the Waterton-Pincher Creek area, a detailed sampling program is now being carried out by the Alberta Department of the Environment and the Energy Resources Conservation Board.

Crews are now in the area to sample wells, creeks, ponds and sloughs. Vegetation and soil samples may be taken at a later date.

The water samples are sent to the laboratory of the Department of the Environment, where they will be analyzed for many contaminants, including heavy metals such as mercury. Results of the sampling will be sent to residents in the area, along with explanations where required.

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